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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, October 26, 2009, at 2 p.m.

House of Representatives

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2009

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

Dr. Barry C. Black, Chaplain of the United States Senate, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, by whose providence our forebears brought forth a Nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to equal justice for all, give the Members of this body that same spirit as they seek to make a better world. May this quest for justice motivate them to eliminate those things that obstruct the coming of Your kingdom.

Each day, may they give primacy to prayer, seeking Your guidance as they strive to make decisions that honor You. Guide them by Your higher wisdom so that they will not give in to disappointment, doubt, or despair.

We pray in Your great name. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five 1-minute requests on each side of the aisle.

CONCERNS REGARDING FUNDING FOR HOME HEALTH CARE AGENCIES

(Mr. MICHAUD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MICHAUD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address concerns I have with the cuts in home health care agencies in the reform package. I applaud the hard work that has gone into crafting this legislation; however, I want to make sure that home health care services for our seniors are not interrupted in our efforts to target waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare system.

Home health care agencies, for example, are one of the most cost-effective ways to provide health care, especially in rural areas. In Maine, 86 percent of the home health care agencies will be operating in the red if we pass the cuts in the bill.

It is crucial that we address these cuts in a way that promotes efficient, high quality care, but does not put the access to health care in rural areas at risk. I am hopeful that we will be able to make this legislation better and pro-

vide quality, affordable health care to all Americans, so that Maine's seniors and home health care agencies in Maine will not be faced with an 86 percent cut in Medicare reimbursements that will force them to operate in the red.

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEBODY'S GETTING A TAX HIKE

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the new reformed, revised, special edition version of the Senate health care bill written in the dark, secret caverns of the Capitol is a whopping 1,500 pages long. Americans for Tax Reform did a word search on the bill and they found some interesting words.

Right here on this chart, the word "tax" is used 124 times. You know, that is the government's favorite word. "Taxes," 16 times; "excise tax," 12 times; "taxpayers," 79 times. Here is a bad one, "taxable," 158 times. That is a whole lot of taxes in this bill.

Of course, the words "tax exempt" are found only 15 times in the bill. There are some more bad words like "penalty" and "require" and "must." And here is a bad one, "shall," 2,585 times in this tax bill—I mean health care bill.

Mr. Speaker, these are some bad words, totaling 3,196 words about taking money from the American taxpayer.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Sounds like somebody is getting a tax hike. No wonder the bill was written in the secret caverns out of public view in this Capitol.

And that's just the way it is.

POSITIVE UPDATE ON RECOVERY PACKAGE

(Mr. WILSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give a positive update on the progress of the recovery package.

When the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act came before Congress earlier this year, I had to make a tough decision on how I would vote. I am happy that I voted for the recovery.

We have had recovery funds go towards improving infrastructure, funding our medical research, and improving our schools for our children. Just last week, my district received over \$20 million in stimulus funds to improve water quality and almost \$2 million in medical research funding.

The positive impacts of this legislation are being seen across the State of Ohio and the country. A report recently shows that the Recovery Act has saved or created about 1 million jobs. In fact, in the last month, unemployment has dropped in each of the 12 counties that I represent in Ohio.

With almost three-fourths of the stimulus funds still set to be released, I expect to see additional jobs saved and created across the country and in my district. I am excited to see the progress that we are making and will continue to make.

SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN IS VITAL TO PROTECTING AMERICAN FAMILIES

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, President Obama was correct when he stated as a candidate for President last year, "Our troops and our NATO allies are performing heroically in Afghanistan, but I have argued for years that we lack the resources to finish the job . . . And that is why, as President, I will make the fight against al Qaeda the top priority that it should be. This is a war we have to win."

Our President has chosen CENTCOM Commander David Petraeus and General Stanley McChrystal to implement a strategy in Afghanistan that would train Afghan security forces, destroy terrorist elements, prevent the Taliban from providing safe haven to terrorists, and promote political and civil development in Afghanistan.

Moving forward, we must provide the reinforcements that General McChrystal has requested. Indecision will only endanger our soldiers and empower our enemies.

I agree with Vice President Dick Cheney: The President is dithering. Democrats and Republicans should join, as President Obama said in his Democratic acceptance speech, to finish the fight against the terrorists.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

PROVIDING TRANSPARENCY IN HEALTH CARE PRICING

(Mr. KAGEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KAGEN. Mr. Speaker, isn't it time we had transparency in all health care pricing? Wouldn't you like to know the price of a pill before you buy it? Wouldn't you like to know the price of the greatest discount a hospital offered at your location? Wouldn't you like to know the lowest price an insurance company accepted for payment in full for their health insurance policy?

This is a picture of several pills you can buy at a grocery store, and the price is always openly disclosed. Isn't it time that Congress passed legislation to guarantee that, at all times, any business entity that offers medical products and services for sale to the public openly disclose all of their prices and then accept the lowest price from everybody that they have accepted from anybody else? Isn't it time we had transparency in health care pricing?

THE FORGOTTEN U.S. TAXPAYER

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the forgotten U.S. taxpayer. On Wednesday, Neil Barofsky, the special inspector general overseeing TARP, said that recouping the billions of dollars given to the insurer AIG and automakers GM and Chrysler "is far from certain." He also noted that \$50 billion set aside to help struggling homeowners lower their mortgage payments will yield "no direct return."

Also on Wednesday, the former chief of the Obama administration's task force on the auto industry, Steven Rattner, commented on the \$20 billion previously lent to GM, "I don't think we are going to see it again," meaning that all the money is gone.

What is wrong with this picture? \$50 billion here, \$20 billion there. What am I missing? How can we spend, spend, spend without any accountability?

I am concerned as I travel across Kansas, my great State, that I hear countless Kansans express doubts that Congress and bureaucrats would make wise decisions with their tax dollars. They were right. With some of these unwise investment decisions that I mentioned today, I think a dose of Kansas commonsense is desperately needed in Washington, DC.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

(Ms. CHU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CHU. Mr. Speaker, many victims of domestic violence are afraid to tell their story. They are afraid to get help or don't know how. These men, women, and children need someone to stand up for them, to know where to turn. That is what Domestic Violence Awareness Month is all about. In fact, this October is the 20th anniversary of legislation to establish this event.

Domestic violence is shockingly common. One in four American women and almost 10 percent of men will be sexually or physically assaulted by a spouse, intimate partner, or acquaintance at some point in their life.

I strongly support full funding of domestic violence programs for fiscal year 2010. This money is sorely needed. According to a recent study, last year, on one day alone, 10,000 people were turned away from local domestic violence programs due to a lack of resources.

I pledge to work on behalf of domestic violence victims here in Congress. I want survivors to know how much I respect and commend them for their bravery, and I want them to know there are services and support groups that can help.

CONGRATULATING FORT BEND, TEXAS

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my home county of Fort Bend, Texas, for having the third highest increase in jobs during the first quarter of last year among the Nation's largest 334 counties. It is impressive, given that of those 334 counties, only eight saw any job increase at all.

We already know what a special place Fort Bend is to live and raise a family. For more than 15 years, Fort Bend has been in the top 20 counties in the United States for economic excellence and population growth. Excellent schools, affordable housing, and extensive recreational facilities have attracted families with impressive demographic profiles. And this creates a local employment base that provides relocating companies with a diverse mix of professional, technical, skilled, and unskilled labor with the highest educational attainment levels in the region.

I am very proud of Fort Bend County for this economic accomplishment, and my family and I feel very fortunate to call it home.